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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

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Statement

The International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, F.I.A.M.C., applauds the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women on the girl child, February 26 - March 9, 2007 at the United Nations, New York, to build a systematic approach against conditions of deprivation and degradation, disease and disability, both medical and societal.

We must, in the words of Pope Paul VI, "place a protective shield of love" over all human life, especially over the most vulnerable and voiceless. There is a grave moral and social duty to justice and to love which echoes in the voice of the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity, wherein a profound moral question comes to Cain, "where is your brother...what have you done?" (Genesis 4:9) Followed by the fearsome judgment of God, "the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10).

In his encyclical "The Gospel of Life", Pope John Paul II tells us that "the blood of every other human killed since Abel is also raised to the Lord" (E.V. 25)

The convention on the girl child is summoned first to "shout out that no one has authority over life" (Pope John Paul II). As life itself is the first good of creation, so the life of the innocent and the little one is most worthy of our deep solicitude. The protective shield of love must be cast over each and every one of them. Accordingly, state parties, non-governmental organizations, health services and social services should work to guard all life and the dignity of the human person "beautifully and wonderfully made". How can we fail to work tirelessly to preserve the innocent beauty of the girl child, guarding her in all aspects, both for her own sake and for the future promise of the new life she will one day bear. This will mean that we guard "virginity and motherhood as two particular dimensions of the fulfillment of the female personality" (Mulieris Dignitatem, John Paul II, 1988).

The whole world knows of the crimes against the child, beginning with the world wide traffic in girl children and young women for sexual abuse, even sexual murder. Their virginity stolen, their hopes of motherhood ended, their personhood and personality destroyed, are crimes which cry out to heaven for justice.

These pernicious evils extend through child pornography, now terribly facilitated by new technologies which can instantaneously bring this degradation of the person and the feminine anywhere in the world. At the same time, every time, this cripples the personality and will of all who use these technologies for such pernicious ends, and, by extension, cripples the whole society and penetrates it with ever escalating violence against the child and woman. This terrible cycle, now spreading everywhere, must be stopped.

Pope John Paul II repeatedly spoke of a "new civilization of love" noting in his encyclical on the dignity of women that "from the 'beginning' woman, like man, was created and 'placed' by God in this order of love" (Mulieris Dignitatem). This good, an absolute personal and social necessity, must begin with the collaboration of all state parties, all organizations using all

enforcement and political means available, on the one hand, and all medical and educational means where applicable to stem the worldwide menace of sex traffic and pornography.

The commission must also address the more subtle but potentially no less critical harm to the girl child in the first world ravages of divorce and child bearing outside of marriage. Millions of little girls are bereft of an authentic home and hearth with the security of parental love given by a father and a mother who regard the call to marriage and the right ordered family as the gravest personal and social duty. Surely the flood of sex crimes against the child, the flood of abuses against the child, physical and psychological, can only be repaired within the family and the family can only be repaired when all the contrivances of the state are once again turned in its favor. Indeed, the very stability of the state itself ultimately depends on the stability of the authentic family, biologically valid and morally right in conception, guaranteed by convention.

No state or international body can fail to address the profound importance of the "anthropological truth" of the integral family, ordained by nature as the first household of the family of man. The girl child, as the boy, has an inalienable right inscribed in the law of nature, nomos, to be born of a mother and father who "know them and love them, who, in mutual exclusivity and charitable cooperation give both life and love to the littlest ones. From the beginning of life through the mature formation of the person and personality.

The family, likewise, must be a protective shield against any ritual practices against the girl child, including ritual genital mutilation, cranial molding, foot and limb binding and the use of various somatic artifacts, to name the most egregious. Appeals to cultural and religious practices do not cancel out the duly autonomous person whose right it is at any time, in any place, to freely enjoy, without harm, the gift of life and everything ordained in nature to serve it as the Creator intended.

Finally, the Catholic physicians, scientists, teachers and bioethicists of F.I.A.M.C. offer their individual work and the corporate efforts of F.I.A.M.C. to the attainment of all the worthy goals of the commission and its protection of the girl child. F.I.A.M.C. asks all doctors, nurses and health care workers world wide to make common cause to promote and protect the girl child, and children of all ages, working through media, personal effort and political collaboration.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his joyous encyclical "God is Love", reminds us that love is built on justice, where there is no justice, there is no love. Beyond all, he says, is the merciful love of God which each man and woman is called to impart to the world.